PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT
AY 2008-2009

Report Date:

School/College: Arts and Sciences

Department/Program: Asian Studies

Person completing the Report: John Nelson

1. **Overview Statement**: Briefly summarize the assessment activities that were undertaken this academic year, indicating:

    a. which program learning outcomes were assessed this year.

    b. who in your department/program was involved in the assessment of the above learning outcomes

Following the general guidelines for assessment conducted throughout the entire university, we assessed only the first program learning outcome. It reads: **(The degree program in Asian Studies will) articulate fundamental issues and themes for the study and understanding of Asian cultures and societies.**

Although this outcome may sound rather ambiguous and broad when compared to other programs that focus on a single discipline, Asian Studies is an interdisciplinary program that depends on courses from a variety of departments. As such, our program learning outcomes must resonate with, and not contradict or undermine, the departmental learning outcomes we rely upon.

The person in charge of assessment is the same as the author of this report. I am the current director of the Asian Studies program at USF.

2. **Please Answers the Following Questions for Each of the Student Outcomes Assessed:**
    a. **<u>What did you do?</u>**
    Describe clearly and concisely how you assessed the learning outcomes that were evaluated this year (e.g., measures, research methods, etc.). [please use bullet points to answer this question]

    • First, I identified courses in which Asian Studies majors were enrolled and which contributed to our curriculum through cross-listings.

The second part states that students will be able to use approaches which represent at least two of the various academic disciplines specific

• I contacted the instructors for those courses--most of whom are affiliated with Asian Studies-- and informed them of the requirement to assess the first program learning outcome, and asked for their cooperation.

• Next, we collaborated on the best way to assess the outcome, concluding that a combination of embedded questions were likely to produce the kind of response that could be identified and assessed, following the rubric I had devised.

• I was supposed to receive copies of all student work, which would provide around 12 documents to be assessed. As of this date and despite my diplomatic encouragement for faculty members to live up to their words of cooperation, I have received only 8 documents.

• I read each essay (4), senior thesis (2), or exam essay question (2), and kept notes about how each document met or fell short of the first program learning outcome.

• Finally, I used the rubric grid to determine the classification for that particular document, ranking it from "very poor" to "superior."

b. <u>What did the faculty in the department or program learn</u>?
Summarize your findings and conclusions as a result of the assessment indicating strengths and weaknesses in student learning demonstrated by this assessment.

<u>Strengths</u>

In most of the student work I assessed, the final grade was high--in the A or B range. This performance shows competence in their coursework, when then reflects indirectly on the Asian Studies major. Students were able for the most part to meet the program learning outcome, which was further divided into two parts. The first states that students will be able to provide an overview of key topics that "promote understanding of Asian cultures, societies, and histories."

to the USF Asian Studies program.

Whether students were discussing new literature in China, Japanese history, Sino-Tibetan relations, or spiritual and religious interpretations of trans-Asia Buddhist practice, they were able to identify and explain adequately a range of subjects that promoted understanding of Asian cultures and societies.

<u>Weaknesses</u>

As mentioned below, some of the weaknesses for Asian Studies program assessment-related purposes were not the students' fault. Instructors affiliated with the program did not, as requested by me, create clearly worded questions that

addressed both dimensions of the program learning outcome. A more detailed discussion follows below.

c. <u>What will be done differently as a result of what was learned</u>?
Discuss how courses and/or curricula will be changed to improve student learning as a result of the assessment. Include a discussion of how the faculty will help students overcome their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

It's obvious that the suggestions I gave to individual faculty to embed a particular question related to assessing Asian Studies program outcomes were not sufficiently clear (or coercive enough). In about half of the examples, it was a matter of subjective interpretation on my part to determine how an answer or essay met or fell short of the program outcome, especially the second part. In other cases, it was easy to see multiple disciplinary approaches used by the student to address the issue or question at hand.

I think it will be necessary for faculty to emphasize a more interdisciplinary set of analytical and intellectual "tools" in their respective courses. For example, if someone specializes in language acquisition, they will also want to include history and perhaps some anthropology as part of their course readings. Without an explicit use and emphasis of interdisciplinary methodologies, we will be hard pressed to provide evidence in future assessments about the first program learning outcome.

At this point, I think the "weakenesses" and "strengths" of the students--in regard to the first program learning outcome--is entirely dependent on faculty course design and the implementation of these strategies. Students enjoy learning by comparing and contrasting perspectives, so it is up to the faculty to make a more sustained effort to do this. As director of the program, I will be emphasizing that we can do a better job in this regard, and will work with faculty to ensure this happens. For one thing, I will ask for syllabi (in advance) to see where there might be an opportunity for integrating multidisciplinary methods. I will also work with individual faculty to see how they might be able to diversify their approach so that it will address the first program learning outcome in a more systematic manner.

3. **Attach a copy of the components of the department/program assessment plan that have been modified since its initial submission:**
   a. Program Mission
   b. Program Learning Goals
   c. Program Learning Outcomes
   d. Program Learning Rubrics aligned with outcomes

e. Curriculum map that shows the courses that pertain to the outcome

There have been no changes in any of these items since their initial submission.

Please return to: Provost Office by June 1, 2009

You can send your replies as either a Word attachment (to: marin@usfca.edu) or as a hard copy to: Provost Office, Lone Mountain Rossi Wing 4th floor.

If you have any questions, please contact: William Murry, Director of Institutional Assessment (wmurry@usfca.edu or x5486).